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New Zealand and Lillooet Techs Talk Technology



New Zealand Tech talks technology with Lillooet's municipal leaders. Left to right is: Grant Loyer, Lillooet CAO; Graeme Wells from New Zealand, Steve Hohner, Director of Public Works; and, John Leech, Executive Director with ASTTBC.

Visiting from New Zealand in person makes for a much more effective way to really get to know other technology practitioners and their professional registering body says Graeme Wells, a Registered Engineering Associate (REA) and member of the Engineering Associates Registration Board of New Zealand (EARB). Graeme and the Executive Director of the Applied Science Technologists and Technicians of BC (ASTTBC), John Leech, were in Lillooet to talk technology with Lillooet's CAO, Grant Loyer and Director of Operations, Steve Hohner. Both are registered with ASTTBC as Applied Science Technologists (AScT). The primary reason for Graeme's visit to BC was to meet with ASTTBC and learn more about the association's operations and while here was treated to a trip through a small portion of the province.

But Why Lillooet? "I had two reasons to bring Graeme to Lillooet," said Leech. "The first is the great countryside and rugged environment. The trip up from Whistler – the vistas and history around Lillooet – the trip through the Marble Canyon – are awesome experiences. Graeme and his wife Lyn marveled at the terrain. The second was to meet and talk technology with Lillooet Chief Administrative Officer, Grant Loyer who was recently appointed to the ASTTBC governing Council." Leech also admitted a personal bias and close tie with Lillooet as he and his family lived in Lillooet from 1957 to

1961. John's father was the Trainmaster for BC Rail (then Pacific Great Eastern Railway) and John was a youth of 9 to 13 at the time the family made Lillooet their home.

During the visit the four technology professionals talked technology and the exchange of skills from one country to another. Graeme's background is in the municipal engineering technology field which led to lively and far-reaching conversation about infrastructure including water and sewage systems, and the ongoing challenges of designing and building systems for new developments as well as the much bigger challenge of maintaining an aging infrastructure. Loyer observed, "The technology is the same or very similar as are the challenges. It was interesting to note how the issues in Lillooet are really no different than in New Zealand."

Leech jumped into the conversation when the topic switched to the recognition of Internationally Trained Professionals. Leech noted, "The borders of technology are few these days and technology professionals are transferring their skills from country to country. Professional associations around the world are increasingly finding a need to connect for the purpose of better understanding the requirements for professional certification and registration. The goal is to achieve a seamless transfer of qualifications. Canada and British Columbia in particular has been working hard to eliminate barriers so that internationally trained professionals can get recognized and registered in BC and gain full employment in their designated field. BC needs the workers in many fields, including engineering and applied science technology. "The skills shortages will become increasingly critical," said Leech. "ASTTBC is working hard to adjust its certification and registrations policies and processes to ensure ease of transfer. We are in a lead position with a number of changes in recent years, including a new internet-based software program which will allow technology professionals to complete a self-assessment against Canadian standards and then to make formal application for registration in ASTTBC."

The group also heard from Graeme Wells about the February 2011 earthquake in Christchurch (on the southern island of New Zealand). Wells lives in Christchurch and experienced first-hand the tremendous impact of the quake. "The loss of life was the real tragedy," said Wells. "Then there was the huge destruction of many parts of the centre part of the city. We will be decades repairing the damage." Coincidentally John Leech and his wife Jennifer Christenson were in New Zealand visiting with Graeme Wells and they left Christchurch on a plane three hours before the quake!

"The internet provides a quick and inexpensive way to connect with other parts of the world, however the face-to-face connection made between Lillooet and New Zealand will have a lasting impression and connection between us, concluded Loyer.